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SUBJECT: BURUNDI CENTRIST PARTY LEADER SEES PARTY DIVISIONS
AS KEY TO POLITICAL IMPASSE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: During an August 6 meeting with the Ambassador, Epitace Bayaganakandi, National Assembly member for the small Movement for the Rehabilitation of the Citizen (MRC) party attributed the political impasse stifling Burundi's progress to the growing internal divisions within the major political parties. Bayaganakandi explained that while there are factions in each of the parties committed to the management of political and economic affairs, there are others who refuse to participate in the legislative process and are instead focused on protecting their political images in preparation for the 2010 elections, a full three years down the road. Bayaganakandi asserted that his young, centrist party is satisfied to play the role of mediator between President Nkurunziza and his major political opposition. Bayaganakandi conveyed that he urged President Nkurunziza to seek a vision for Burundi, and to avoid future scandals by coveting experience over loyalty when naming individuals to influential positions in the government. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The leader of Burundi's MRC party and member of the National Assembly, Epitace Bayaganakandi, shared his perceptions of the political impasse plaguing the Burundi government with the Ambassador on August 6. Bayaganakandi asserted that the root of the stalemate can be attributed to internal problems within the major opposition parties and their political ambitions for the 2010 elections. Bayaganakandi claimed that FRODEBU, UPRONA and the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party each have 2 wings consisting of those who actively seek cooperation and compromise with Nkurunziza's government, and those who refuse to participate in the legislative process. He noted that certain factions of the Union for National Progress (UPRONA), the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU), and even the ruling CNDD-FDD party do not want to share in the blame and the responsibility of the problems plaguing Burundi today and are instead distancing themselves to protect their political agendas for the future. Bayaganakandi conceded that there are some in opposition who continue to participate fully in the parliament, in an attempt to resolve a potential budgetary crisis, but argued that they are only responding to the pressure being exerted by Nkurunziza who is characterizing political abstainers as rebels. Bayaganakandi lamented that dialogue between the major political parties is now nearly impossible as goodwill is secondary to achieving their own political objectives.

¶3. (SBU) Bayaganakandi stated that his predominately Tutsi MRC party was less than 5 years old, originating during

Burundi's transitional period following the civil war. Bayaganakandi declared that the objective of his centrist MRC party was to be a catalyst for institutional change throughout Burundi's political, economic and social spectrum.

Unfortunately, he complained, since 2005, little or no change can be seen other than in the areas of security, education and health. Instead, Bayaganakandi points to corruption, human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings and various financial scandals as the major contributions of Nkurunziza's ruling government. Bayaganakandi claimed that the MRC only wishes to stay in their present role as mediators between the major opposition parties and the government. Bayaganakandi maintains that his party is advising President Nkurunziza to keep the promises he has made to Burundi's people and the international community, and to respect the constitution. In addition, Bayaganakandi stated that the MRC party is asking opposition parties not to form blockages to progress and to allow the financial and political institutions to keep functioning.

13. (SBU) Bayaganakandi reiterated the necessity for Nkurunziza's government to initiate a productive dialogue between all of the political voices. He also hoped that Nkurunziza would actively seek good and objective advice, actively seek a political coalition and govern with a vision for the future. In particular, in light of recent scandals and political failures, Bayaganakandi urged President Nkurunziza to take heed of the distinction between political positions and technical positions. Bayaganakandi explained that appointees to critical positions cannot be made out of loyalty without respect to their relative experience. He pointed to the naming of Isaac Bizimana, a former cashier for the CNDD-FDD party, as the Governor of the Central Bank and who is now in custody for possible misappropriation of funds in the recent Interpetrol scandal. Bayaganakandi also called upon the international community to facilitate a dialogue

amongst the political factions by reminding all players that compromise and sacrifice are the keys to successful solutions.

14. (SBU) Comment: Unlike the FRODEBU and UPRONA parties and their leaders, the small MRC party has virtually no aspirations for political dominance in the governance of Burundi. In that respect, Bayaganakandi spoke rationally and objectively about his views on the current political impasse.

Although he did not offer more in the way of solutions besides the ubiquitous call for dialogue, Bayaganakandi did suggest that the Parliament's disorganized and unproductive preoccupation with scandals, and the President's inability to surround himself with capable and independent advisors is only complicating politician's abilities to keep Burundi moving forward economically and socially. Bayaganakandi spoke not necessarily as a politician with an agenda, but as a Burundian who cared for the future of his nation. End Comment.

MOLLER